

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 ACDA-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 OPIC-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1435

INFO CINCUSNAVEUR

AMEMBASSY LISBON

CINCEUR

US DOCOSOUTH

USMISSION NATO

CONFIDENTIAL MADRID 2158

E.0. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT SP PO

SUBJ: FALSE PRESS STORIES ON TROOP LANDINGS AT ROTA SEVILLE

REF: MADRID 2004

1. FEDERICO VILLAGRAN, DIRECTOR OF SEVILLE DAILY "CORREO DE ANDALUCIA" HAS BEEN IMPRISONED PENDING TRIAL IN CONNECTION WITH CORREO'S MARCH 25 REPORT ALLEGING 7,000 TROOPS HAD DIS-EMBARKED AT ROTA, POSSIBLY FOR INTERVENTION IN PORTUGAL (REF-TEL). CORREO'S REPORT WAS DENIED SAME DAY BY MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, WHICH ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT LEGAL ACTION WOULD BE INITIATED AGAINST VILLAGRAN FOR POSSIBLE VIOLATION OF PRESS LAW PROVISIONS CONCERNING "RESPECT FOR TRUTH" AND "MAINTENANCE OF EXTERNAL PEACE." SUBSEQUENTLY CORREO, WHICH HAS REPUTATION AS FEARLESS AND HIGHLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER AND WHICH HAS HAD SEVERAL RECENT RUN-INS WITH GOVERNMENT, PUBLISHED MINISTRY OF INFORMATIONS DENIAL AS REQUIRED, BUT COUPLED IT WITH MIS-LEADING HEADLINES AND PHOTOS SUGGESTING THERE WAS SOME SUBSTANCE

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TO ITS EARLIER REPORTS OF IMPENDING MILITARY ACTION.

2. COMMENT: COMMENT: JAILING OF VILLAGRAN IS STRONGER ACTION THAN GOVERNMENT NORMALLY TAKES AGAINST ERRING JOURNALISTS IN SUCH CASES. GOS APPEARS TO HAVE REACTED STRONGLY BECAUSE OF VILAGRAN'S REPUTATION AS GADFLY, GRAVE CONCERN IN SPANISH MILITARY CIRCLES OVER SENSATIONALIST INACCURACIES IN REPORT AND ITSIMPLICATIONS OF MISUSE OF BASES BY U.S., AND BECAUSE OF MFA'S SENSITIBITY AT THIS TIME OVER DISTORTIONS THAT MIGHT UPSET DELICATELY BALANCED RELATIONS WITH PORTUGAL.

STABLER

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Message Attributes

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To: STATE
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